



DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES BOARD AREA 10

*Protecting and Advocating for Persons with
Developmental Disabilities in Los Angeles County*

FCC MAIL ROOM

January 29, 1997

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Mr. William F. Canton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street N.W.
Washington D.D. 20554

Re: Docket 96-45 (Universal Service)

Dear Mr. Canton,

The Developmental Disabilities Board Area X is responding to your request for comments in the case of NPRM, FCC 96-45. We join with the multitude of public and private agencies and other entities focussed on serving people with disabilities to voice our support of the Universal Service measure (Docket 96-45). Area Board X is a one of 13 area boards established by the State Lanterman Developmental Services Act to protect and advocate for the legal, civil and service rights of persons with developmental disabilities. It is our feeling that this measure is a strong step in the direction of enabling persons with disabilities to live meaningful and productive lives.

There are many homebound persons with disabilities who would be able to achieve full-time employment if employers were able to see telecommuting as a financially viable employment option. This could only occur if the barrier of long distance charges were eliminated. Encouraging the telecommuting option would be a critical step toward increasing the employability of persons with disabilities, and subsequently reducing their reliance upon public aid, a win-win situation.

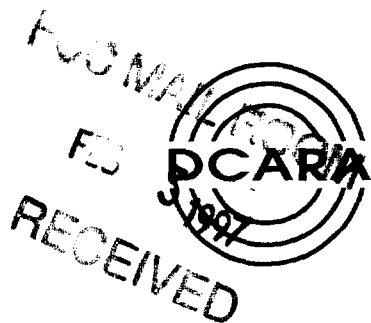
Please accept our strong endorsement of this important measure.

Sincerely,

Roberta Newton
Executive Director

cc: Dr. M. J. Willard, National Telecommuting Institute

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William F. Canton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

January 30, 1997

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C.

In the Matter of Docket No. 96-45 (Universal Service)

Dear Mr. Canton,

We were pleased to see that the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Services has recommended that long distance voice and data line connections charges between disabled people working from their homes and their employers be waived. As a non-profit agency focused on the needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing people, we fully support this recommendation.

The Deaf are a group that is chronically un- or underemployed. They face many challenges in the workplace, not the least being discrimination based on general feeling of discomfort on the part hearing people when dealing with a Deaf person. One-to-one communication can be difficult when the employee does not use spoken English, but rather written English or American Sign Language. Computers and other technological advances have been a boon to working Deaf people because the focus is often shifted from spoken English to visual forms of communication. Deaf people have found many job opportunities in the fields that use such technologies - from computer programming to graphic design to computerized bookkeeping. However, Deafness is rather rare, and Deaf people tend to be scattered in every community, from rural to urban. Those in more rural areas often find their opportunity to work even more limited. Telecommuting opens the doors to opportunities for many to work to their full potential.

The FCC has recognized that Deaf people who use TTY's for telephone communication are entitled to a reduction of telephone rates because their telephone conversations take longer to complete than voice conversations. In the same way, the Board's recommendation would allow Deaf people who must or who would prefer to work from home to compete on a more "level playing field," with increased access to many more jobs.

We urge you to adopt the Federal-State Joint Board's recommendation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Allphin
Lisa Allphin for
John F Levesque
Executive Director

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